



C IS FOR CARROTS, COMMUNITY GARDENS, AND CO-OPS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE WAYS IN WHICH SESAME STREET APPROACHES NUTRITION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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In the realm of entertainment education and media studies, there is a sizable amount of research linking children's nutrition and early educational television shows; Sesame Street being one of the most commonly studied television programs. However, there is no work that attempts to connect nutrition with sustainability and social justice in the context of children's educational television, despite the fact that the portrayal of these issues in the media is incredibly significant, especially in regards to children and their understanding of these complex topics.

In the research I have conducted this year, I have thematically analyzed three seasons of Sesame Street (36, 42, and 43) in order to understand the ways it relays important messages about nutrition, sustainability, and social justice to its viewers. I coded each episode of these seasons by noting key words, phrases, and recurring sketches. After a preliminary viewing and coding of these seasons, my results illustrated that in the approximately 39 total times in which food was brought up in the episodes, nearly 37 of those short sketches focused on health and nutrition. That means that only two of the total mentions of food had anything to do with sustainable food and/ or social justice. In fact, the single reference to sustainability did not explicitly connect with food, but rather the concept of recycling. Through these results, I have concluded that while nutrition is brought up in many episodes, issues surrounding sustainability and social justice are simply not addressed in the curriculum.

Furthermore, this study connects the often disjointed fields of food studies, media studies, and environmental and health communication and provides a more holistic perspective on how these important topics are being conveyed, *or not*, to our children. This field could greatly benefit from additional research into motives and rationale of children's educational television producers as well as diverse examples of educational programs that better include the aforementioned topics.

